

PROJECT ICARUS

Written by

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FADE IN

INT. O'MALLEY'S BAR - NIGHT

The smell of tobacco smoke is only undercut by the pungent scent of hot sweaty men. The sounds of laughter, shouting, and excitement fill the room. At the bar-counter, two frosty mugs are filled past full with cheap terrible tasting beer. The beers are then delivered to two sweaty half-naked men in the center of a ring of people. The smallest of the two men, James (20's, tall, average build), sits on a chair at the edge of the circle of people. His friend, ERIC, rubs him on the shoulders like a coach would do for a boxer.

ERIC

Are you sure about this James?
You're completely wasted.

JAMES

(sloppy Irish accent)
It's alright Danny Boy. I've got
the luck o' the Irish on my side.

ERIC

You're only Irish when you're
drinking.

JAMES

(sloppy Irish accent)
Aren't we all?

ERIC

You are the worst Irishman. Not
even including the fact that you
only seen able to talk in Irish
cliches.

James picks up the pint that had been delivered to him and drinks the whole thing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

If you lose your rent money, you're
sleeping outside.

JAMES

(sloppy accent)
Relax laddy...

ERIC

That's Scotland...

JAMES
(sloppy accent)
Look here lad, if I lost this,
could I consider m'self a proper
Irishman? I submit to you I could
not.

ERIC
James! You're not really Irish!

JAMES
You're not really a man!

ERIC
You're from Texas!

JAMES
You're sexy.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about saying you're not a
man. That was mean.

ERIC
You are very drunk.

JAMES
You keep saying that. I'm not drunk
but I think some of these other
guys might be.

A "referee" enters the ring and looks at the two shirtless
gentlemen.

REFEREE
Are you men ready? A reminder. No
scratching or biting. Nothing below
the belt. Have a good fight
gentlemen.

James stands and immediately collapses back into the chair.
ERIC helps him back up.

ERIC
That inspires confidence.

REFEREE
Whenever you're ready men!

James sways in place. James runs in for the first shot,
misses by a lot, and stumbles to the ground.

James springs back up to his feet in time to see several blows which land near his face and chest. James puts his hand up to block, looks for an opening, then delivers several body shots. The other man pushes James back. James comes back with a haymaker. The other man dodges and delivers several a few heavy punches to James' face. James stumbles back and dabs the fresh blood from his face. James shakes his head to clear his mind and assumes a fighting stance in the center of the ring. This time it's serious business. The big man throws a few wild bunches. James easily dodges them like a pro and throws two punishing body shots as a response, followed by a head shot. The big man throws wild heavy punch after wild heavy punch. James dodges a few but the others land hard. James sluggishly tries to get in more shots but he misses most and the others have no strength to them. The big man delivers the knock out punches and it's over.

The Bartender appears from the crowd.

BARTENDER

As agreed, here's your tab...

James looks at the price.

JAMES

Holy shit!

The Bartender then points to the big man and his friend.

BARTENDER

...and, of course, *their* tab.

James looks at their tab.

JAMES

Shit...

BARTENDER

How would you like to pay for that?

JAMES

Well, you see, here's the thing-

Before that thought is over James and ERIC and bolting for the exit. The big man and his friend follow hot in pursuit. ERIC and James explode out of the bar and into the night air. James directs ERIC to go the other way and he does. James takes off left.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

James sprints through the rain soaked night, turning corners and hurdling over obstacles but still the beating footsteps and heavy breathing can be heard from close behind.

JAMES
Oh, my God.

James beats it around a corner and not long after the big man comes around after him.

MAN
HEL--

James stops at the sound of the distress call. He looks back and sees the big man storming toward him. James takes off in the direction of the call, straight toward the big man. Just before James is about to collide he pushes himself up with some invisible force and vaults over the big man. The man just blinks in bewilderment as James races away.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

James swerves around a corner to see a MUGGER pointing a gun at another man.

JAMES
Hey! You put that gun down!

The MUGGER swings around and points the gun at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Oh, shit!

James dives behind the wall again.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I did not think this through!

MUGGER
What are you doing here?! Go away!

JAMES
Look I'm just here to help that
horribly distressed individual you
were previously pointing the gun
at.

James steps out from behind the wall.

JAMES (CONT'D)
For, you see, I am a hero of super--
oh God...

Just that moment James throws up on in the alley.

MUGGER
What's wrong with you?

JAMES
What do you mean? Mentally or
physically? Because physically, I
may have had one or two beers
tonight. Mentally? A lot of things
at this moment.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hold on, let me get my game face
on.

James shakes his head back and forth and slaps himself in the
face a bit to wake up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Alright, I'm good to go.

MUGGER
Don't move any closer or I'll
shoot!

James just shoots him an "are you serious?" look, waves his
hand, and the clip falls out of the gun. James waves his hand
again and the hammer on the pistol slides back and discharges
the round that was in the chamber. James holds his hand
straight out and the gun is pulled right out of the MUGGER's
hand and floats in mid-air. With a few hand movements the gun
breaks apart, cleanly, piece-by-piece, until it's all on the
ground. James looks satisfied.

BIG MAN
There you are!

James' satisfaction melts. He whips around to see the BIG MAN
standing a foot away from him. Quick foot steps can be heard
behind him. It's the MUGGER trying to get the best of him.
James sucker punches the BIG MAN in the gut to incapacitate
him. He then swivels around and puts his arms up as guards.
The MUGGER throws a few punches but they all bounce off an
unseen barrier. James lowers his guard and dodges the next
few punches. James lands a few of his own with just enough
time to pivot back toward the BIG MAN who is now fully
recovered and is swinging as well.

James dodges and punches hard, swings around, and lands a few cheap shots on the MUGGER. Finally, the MUGGER and the BIG MAN attack at once. James stops both of their fists for a minute before pushing them both back with tremendous force.

James turns his attention towards the MUGGER first. The MUGGER pulls himself from a pile of garbage. James readjusts his stance. From a distance, James picks up the MUGGER until he's hovering 10 feet above the ground.

JAMES

Now, listen to me! I'm giving you this one chance only! You're going to go home, take a long shower, and you're gonna rethink your life! And you're never going to break any law ever!

With that, James hurls him back into the pile of garbage. The MUGGER quickly stands up and runs away, dropping the stolen wallet in the process. James whips around, back to the BIG MAN.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And you! I don't have any money to give you! I'm sorry!

BIG MAN

Whatever! Keep it! Just let me go!

JAMES

You may leave.

The BIG MAN sprints away. James turns to the victim.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Is there anything--

Before he can finish the sentence, the victim takes off without even grabbing this wallet.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wait! You forgot... a lot of things. Not the least of which is a 'thank you'.

James groans, massages his sore body, and walks away.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

James bursts in through the door, slams it shut and collapses, face-first, into the couch. A voice calls from a different room.

VICTORIA
Who just came in?

James mumbles into the couch. VICTORIA emerges from her room.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Hey James. Where's Eric?

James mumbles into the couch again.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Where's your shirt?

James turns his head to the side, lazily glances around the room, then shrugs. VICTORIA looks down a moment then stands up quickly.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Well, you want some ice cream?

James nods his head and VICTORIA goes to the freezer. She prepares a bowl of ice-cream then fills a plastic sandwich bag with ice-cubes. She places the bowl on the coffee table in front of James then places the ice-bag to his bruises. VICTORIA observes the scrapes and bruises and sighs. Just then ERIC comes in through the front door. James and VICTORIA both look up to see a beaten, bloody looking ERIC.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Oh my God, Eric! What happened?!

JAMES
Jesus! Are you alright?

ERIC just shakes his head through his tears and painfully limps to the bathroom without saying a word. VICTORIA follows him to the bathroom. She helps him remove his shirt and pants and treats his wounds.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - LATER

James and ERIC sit with their backs to the opposite walls, facing each other. ERIC is covered in bandages and bruises. They both hang their heads low.

JAMES
Eric, I'm really sorry.

ERIC shakes his head.

ERIC
I don't blame you.

JAMES
I plan to pay you back all the
money they took from you.

ERIC
You don't need to do that.

JAMES
I need to do something.

ERIC
I need you to stop blaming
yourself.

JAMES
I can't do that. I am so, so sorry
and I need you-

ERIC
James, just STOP!

A long silence follows.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go to bed.

JAMES
Alright, we'll talk about it
tomorrow.

ERIC
Whatever...

ERIC walk into his room. James waits a minute then goes into
his room.

INT. PROCESSING ROOM

The black hood gets whipped off of James' head. James looks
around frantically. As far as he can tell, he's all alone.
James struggles with the cuffs binding his hands and feet.
Suddenly, a man walks into the room, places a folder on the
table, and examines James for a moment.

Beat.

JAMES
Where am I? What am I doing here?

EXAMINER

You seem like a pretty smart man
Mr. Miller, and a man as smart as
you would already know why your
here.

James sighs and hangs his head.

EXAMINER (CONT'D)

Your display last night was very
impressive Mr. Miller.

The EXAMINER smiles and leans in.

EXAMINER (CONT'D)

How would you like to meet others
like you?

Beat.

JAMES

I-- uh... wait... others?

EXAMINER

Yes, Mr. Miller. But first, I have
some questions.

JAMES

(suddenly irate)

Wait a minute. I've got some
questions for you. Like, why'd you
kidnap and blindfold me then take
me out to some Guantanamo Bay for
Supers out in 'God-knows-where'?

EXAMINER

Contrary to what you may think,
this isn't "Guantanamo Bay for
Supers." It is however a secure and
sensitive institute for refining
your abilities. It can be a place
of refuge for you but I don't want
you to make the mistake of thinking
you have a choice.

EXT. UNKNOWN WOODS - DAY

James bumps along a dirt road in an old military jeep. Two
armed military personnel bookend him in the back seat. James
looks down at his cuffs then looks back up at the scenery
around him. Suddenly, the trees stop at a flat iron wall
which stands about 15 feet tall. The stops the Jeep, puts it
in park, and walks out to go somewhere.

James drowns in the uncomfortability of the silence. James takes a deep breath and opens his mouth to say something.

GAURD

No talking!

James deflates quickly. A minute later the gate starts to open as the driver walks back up to the Jeep. He throws it in gear and takes off again.

As they enter the compound, James' eyes land on a sign which reads 'Carter Institute.' Then he notices the institute itself which is strikingly plain. It looks more like a college dorm room than anything else. Nothing looks more than a couple of years old.

INT. CARTER INSTITUTE - CONTINUOUS

The JEEP DRIVER brings James into the lobby and sets down two full duffle bags on the floor. LANCASTER stands with his back to the two. When the bags are dropped, LANCASTER turns around with a hard grace. What's revealed is an old face, weathered and stern, framed by long grey hair with thick-rimmed glasses. Though through the coldness is an empathetic kindness burried behind his eyes.

LANCASTER

Hello Thomas.

DRIVER

Is there anything else you need, sir?

LANCASTER

No Thomas; that'll be all.

The DRIVER moves his arm to salute, stops himself mid-motion, then drops his arm. He shoots LANCASTER a disapproving look before walking out the door.

LANCASTER (CONT'D)

You must be James. I'm Robert Lancaster. I'm the director of dormitory living here at the Carter Institute. Pick up your bags and I'll show you to your room.

James and LANCASTER walk towards the room and the bags float behind them.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open. James walks in his new room and sets his bags on the bed. LANCASTER watches from the hallway.

LANCASTER

Your door code is pinned to the cork board. Memorize it and destroy the paper. Meals are at 8, 12, and 6:30. They'll last an hour-and-a-half but you have free access to our pantry and kitchen area any time. I think you'll find it should more than suit your needs, whatever they may be. Everything else, you'll learn as you go.

LANCASTER sighs and allows himself a moment of pity.

LANCASTER (CONT'D)

There is one other matter, though, that needs to be talked about before we can move on. Your first few weeks will not be easy here. In fact, they may be some of the hardest of your life. Your first week you won't be allowed to talk to anyone or use your powers at all.

JAMES

What if I get caught using my powers the first week?

LANCASTER

You'll be killed on site.

James' eyes go wide.

JAMES

And if I'm caught talking to someone?

LANCASTER

For every time you're caught talking to someone else within your probation, that's another week of probation. The Carter Institute takes offenses very seriously. Your week starts now. Good luck James and... try not to die.

INT. JAMES' ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The alarm clock shows 10:21 AM. James rolls over and squints at the clock. He rubs his eyes and sits up on the edge of the bed. James lazily strides to the two duffle bags now sitting on his desk. He opens one up and sees it's full of kaki pants and polo shirts. He opens the other one and it's got some dress clothes, some athletic clothes, and some warm weather cold weather attire. James sighs.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

James walks down the hallway, still not fully awake. As he's about to pass another student they bump him on the shoulder and walk a few paces before turning around.

RUDE STUDENT

Hey! Watch where your walking New Guy!

James is able to utter a single sound before cutting himself off. James turns to see an instructor looking back. He then looks back at the RUDE STUDENT.

RUDE STUDENT (CONT'D)

Yeah! That's what I thought!

James steams as he continues walking to the kitchen.

INT. INSTITUTE KITCHEN - LATER

A single egg sizzles in the pan before being scooped up and placed on a sandwich. James puts some bacon on for the final touch and puts the top slice on the sandwich. James quickly spins around and grabs some orange juice out of the fridge. When he spins back around he notices his sandwich is gone. He turns and looks toward the door and a student is walking out with his sandwich in hand.

JAMES

That's my-- (sigh) Never mind.

James turns back to the counter and there's a student squatting there.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ah! Holly shit!

TELEPORTING STUDENT

Thanks New Guy!

The student grabs the juice and disappears in a cloud of smoke.

JAMES

Great...

EXT. INSTITUTE GROUNDS - NOON

CLOSE ON LOUDSPEAKER

ANNOUNCER

(OVER SPEAKER)

Your daily allotted yard time has begun and will run for the next hour. Remember, the slightest disturbance will be met with death. Success can only come through restraint. Hubris is dangerous. And finally, maintain a safe environment at all times. That is all.

CUT TO:

James walks through the yard. He tries to pass by unnoticed but he quickly becomes aware that everyone is looking at him which makes him very uncomfortable. It becomes apparent that the other students are closing in around him. Eventually the path in front of him is blocked. James turns around and the way behind him is blocked as well. ALEX, the largest of the students, steps forward.

ALEX

So, you're the new guy?

Alex looks him over.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'm not impressed. Well New Guy. Welcome to Fort Carter. Let me teach you how things work around here.

Alex lifts James easily off the ground.

ALEX (CONT'D)

In here, there's no civility. You survive by being good. You thrive by being great. Unfortunately, you're the new guy. Which means I'm in the unfortunate position of having to teach you these lessons personally. Here, lesson 1.

Alex strikes James fiercely in the face twice then once in the gut.

ALEX (CONT'D)
...and don't forget.

Alex throws James on the ground. James doubles over in pain and heaves to catch his breath. He looks up at the other students but everyone one just stares at him or have already begun to disperse.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

James limps into the infirmary leaning his head back to stifle the blood coming from his broken nose. The DOCTOR looks up from his computer to see the broken-looking man now in front of him.

DOCTOR
Cool.

James just looks at him quizzically.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
You must be the new guy. Here, come sit down on this table. Let me see here. I'll give you a few stitches, set that broken nose, give you a lolipop, and send you on your way. How does that sound?

The Doctor goes back to get some supplies.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
You're allowed to talk to me by the way!

The Doctor comes back to an unsure James.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
This isn't a trick. You're only banned from talking to students. How would I be able to do my job if I couldn't talk with you?

JAMES
Funny enough, that's something they neglected to tell me.

DOCTOR
Well, I'll start with the nose. Okay?

JAMES
Yeah, alright.

The Doctor moves toward his nose.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Wait, wait, wait!

DOCTOR
What? Something wrong?

JAMES
No, I just- is it going to hurt?

DOCTOR
Yes. A lot.

JAMES
Then I don't want to do it.

DOCTOR
That's not an option.

JAMES
Alright...

Crack! James screams in pain. After moment the screaming subsides.

DOCTOR
Hurts like a bitch don't it?

JAMES
I really don't like you right now.

The Doctor appears with two shot glasses of whiskey.

DOCTOR
My prescription, both for the pain
and for the ill-will, is booze.
Only to be administered with a
friend.

They both click glasses then drink.

JAMES
Oh man! (beat) You're not a normal
doctor are you?

DOCTOR
I don't know if you've noticed but
this is not a normal place.

Silence.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

You wanna know my advice? Don't try to block out the pain. Take it all in. Embrace it like a gift given to you by whatever caring God you do or don't believe in. Because it's only going to be pain from here on out. Don't let anyone tell you different. Life for you is going to be pain every day. Now you could take it or fight it. I'm not saying one choice is best. Only you can make that choice.

Beat.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm gonna need more whiskey. I gotta get those stitches in.